

ROYAL NORMAL COLLEGE

AND

Academy of Music for the Blind,

UPPER NORWOOD, S.E.

ANNUAL PRIZE FESTIVAL,

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9th, 1879.

PRESENTATION OF PRIZES AND DIPLOMAS

BY

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS OF WALES

WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES.

ADDRESS

ON

THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE BLIND

BY

THE REV. CANON BARRY, D.D.

1879.

This Leaflet has been compiled from the 'Times,' 'Daily Telegraph,' 'Daily News,' 'Morning Post,' 'Standard,' and 'Daily Chronicle,' of July 10th, 1879.

The Annual Prize Festival of the Royal Normal College for the Blind, Upper Norwood, was held yesterday afternoon (July 9, 1879), the prizes being presented by Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, who was accompanied by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, their three daughters, and Prince Louis of Battenburg. Their Royal Highnesses were received at the College by His Grace the Duke of Westminster, President; Lord Richard Grosvenor, Chairman of the Executive Committee; Sir Rutherford Alcock, Hon. Treasurer; Major Cavendish FitzRoy, Hon. Secretary; T. R. Armitage, Esq., M.D., and Sir Peter Coats, Vice-Presidents; the Archbishop of York, Dean of Westminster, Canon Barry, Marquis of Northampton, C. Sartoris, Esq., and F. J. Campbell, Esq., Principal.

On their arrival the Royal party were conducted to the hall of the Institution, where a select programme of music was admirably given by the pupils of the College. On the platform, backed by the organ, were grouped about fifty of the musical scholars, the young ladies being attired in white, with coloured ribbons. Among them, though not named in the programme, sat Mr. Campbell, the Principal, who performed the duties of accompanist and general conductor with quiet unflagging energy. As soon as the Royal party had taken their seats, Mr. A. Wilnot played Mozart's Minuet from the 'Symphony in E flat Major,' arranged for the organ by Mr. E. J. Hopkins. This performance was followed by Mendelssohn's 'Hunting Song,' in which the choir showed great proficiency, and a pianoforte solo, 'Kuhlauf's Sonatina,' Op. 55, No. 1, which was well played by Miss Grace Edmond, a little girl whose feet, when she was elevated on a pile of music books, were a long way from the floor. The attention which the young Princesses paid to this performer, and indeed to all who took part in the concert, and the earnest and discriminating applause into which they sometimes broke, were, as Mr. Samuel Pepys would certainly have said, 'pretty to see.' Miss Maggie Reece sang the air 'Slumber Beloved,' from Bach's 'Christmas Oratorio,' accompanied on the organ by Mr. E. J. Hopkins (Organ Professor). Master Alfred Hollins then played Sir W. Sterndale Bennett's piano solo, 'The Fountain,' with an equalised force remarkable in so young a musician; and this was succeeded by Macfarren's part song, 'The Coronach,' in which the College choir again acquitted themselves to admiration, especially in the diminuendo passage leading to the close. The third movement of Niels Gade's Concertstück, 'Spring Fantasia,' for solo voices, orchestra, and pianoforte, was then rendered so effectively as to win the lion's share of applause, the Prince of Wales joining heartily in the tribute, and the Princesses following his example. The piano part was played with great spirit by Master W. F. Schwier; the orchestral part was arranged and performed on a second piano, by Mr. Frits Hartvigson (Piano Professor). In the duet by Spohr, for two violins, with which the concert concluded, Prince Alexander of Hesse, whose education is being conducted at the College, had for his second Mr. Carl Deichmann (Violin Professor), and both executants were deservedly applauded.

From the concert room the Royal party was conducted first to a hall in which the gymnastic class went through its exercise with light dumb-bells, and afterwards across the green hillside on which the College is built to a spacious marquee in the centre of the boy's beautiful playground. The proceedings were opened with an address by Canon Barry, which commanded attention by its solidity and clearness.

ADDRESS

BY THE

REV. CANON BARRY, D.D.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESSES,—

I am privileged to speak in the name of the Council (not as having earned that privilege by any special devotion to the service of the College, but simply as being able to regard its work by the light of some educational experience), in order to lay before your Royal Highnesses and before this assembly a brief statement of the special principles, the special work, and the special needs of this—the Royal Normal College and Academy of Music for the Blind.

I shall not deem it necessary to preface that statement by any appeal to the sympathy—half reverent and half compassionate—which is the solace, almost the due, of all who are under weakness, suffering, or deprivation. For to the blind it is always very largely given. I have always thought that the proverbial cheerfulness and contentment of the blind are, under God, mainly due to this free bestowal on them of warmhearted human fellowship; and that this shows how infinitely more essential is that fellowship to happiness and peace, than the freest power of entrance by sight into all the beauties of nature, and into all the realised wealth of the human mind, as it is embodied in the treasures of Art and Literature. Such sympathy, I cannot doubt, is at this moment the uppermost feeling in every mind here. It can need no stimulating word: nay, on its free spontaneousness depend its whole vitality and beauty. But this College, while it thankfully accepts, while it gladly relies on, this natural and powerful sympathy, yet ventures to appeal largely, perhaps mainly, to other considerations, of public spirit, public duty, public interest.

Its whole conception (in which it stands out with a certain distinctiveness of character) is to regard the blind, as not a burden, but an integral element of the whole community—a class under deprivation and disadvantage indeed, and therefore having some special claim for sympathy and aid—but yet a class which, having received that aid, is capable of self-dependence, capable of claiming its place in the education and work of the English nation, capable in degree of performing duties to society and bearing some share of the burdens laid upon it. It is in order

so to open the prison gates of blindness, that they, who might otherwise be helpless dependents on charity and hopeless burdens on society, may go out into the atmosphere of work, of freedom, of independence, that it asks the thoughtful, as well as the kindly, consideration of the English people.

I. This leading conception is stamped upon all its characteristics. It claims to be a College of the Higher Education, crowning such organisations as exist already for more elementary education both of head and hand. For it believes in regard to the blind not only that this higher education is possible for them, but that in it they are less hopelessly disadvantaged, than is ordinarily thought, in comparison with those who see.

We recognise in education the three great stages—first, of perception through the senses or through the word of the teacher; next, of memory, accumulating and storing up the impressions gained; lastly, of the reflection, which grasps, organises, and improves these treasures of perception and memory, and perhaps goes on to originate, and so to add to them, for the blessing of humanity. Is it not clear that in the first stage only the blind are at disadvantage? Knowledge through one channel, the largest and freest channel of sight, is quite cut off. But even here they who know tell us of the marvellous delicacy and vividness, in which the other senses of hearing and touch rise up to fill in some degree the great void so created; they tell us how in some sort the absence of the distracting variety and richness of vision concentrates and so deepens the impressions derived through narrower channels; they tell us how the contact through word and hearing with the living mind of the teacher compensates largely for the restriction of access to books. Even in the first stage of perception it is wonderful how much may be done, and has been done, to lighten disadvantage. In the further stage of memory, of thought, of origination, I am bold to say that there can be no reason why the blind should not claim equality—why, indeed, the being thrown so much on themselves may not even strengthen the memory and cultivate the quiet strength of reflection—why the silence and retirement, which are almost the necessary conditions of origination, may not be even furthered by the encompassing darkness of the eye.

So the promoters of the College have reasoned. They have felt in some measure dissatisfied with the merely elementary and often mechanical training given to the blind. There is in England at this moment an unmistakable desire for Higher Education, not merely for the professions and occupations of life, but for the cultivation of our true humanity and as an obedience to a Law of God imprinted on our nature—as (if I may use words spoken by the late Prince Consort some twenty years ago) the recognition of ‘a mission which man has no right to throw off’—‘a mission, by the fulfilment of which he can develop noble faculties, and place himself in harmony with his Divine prototype.’ In

the progress towards this ideal they have believed that the blind can claim and can hold their place. On that belief they have acted; and you need only go through the classes of this Institution and listen to the character of the teaching and the learning—you need only read the Reports of the Examiners, who have even to apologise for almost unvaried eulogy—to show that their belief and action have not been in vain.

The College may indeed rightly appeal to some peculiar sympathy: it may perhaps reasonably ask some special share of that aid in its first starting, which almost all Institutions for Higher Education require. But it desires to take its place boldly among these, and to work with them in its own peculiar function for the completion of the edifice, of which in elementary education the foundations are now broadly and firmly laid.

II. But, while it thus works on these broad general lines of progress, it yet naturally admits some peculiarities of system which adapt it to the peculiarity of its work. It is not only a 'Royal Normal College' of Higher Education; it is an 'Academy of Music for the Blind.' It has been obvious to all who have dealt with the education of the blind, that the defect of eye must be supplied (as it can to a marvellous degree be supplied) by relying on the sister senses of the ear and the touch. But hardly till now has music, in this country at least, been prominently and resolutely used in the training of the blind—partly as an educating influence, partly as a means of self-support and independence in the future.

That it is an educating influence we are learning, year by year, more perfectly; and certainly it is an educating influence of peculiar subtlety, telling through the imagination at once on the intellect and the emotions, capable of the profoundest and most elaborate science, and capable on the other hand of appealing simply and directly to the heart. But to the blind it has surely a special function. Their imagination cannot be stimulated and educated by purity and vigour of form, and by richness, harmony, intensity of colour. For them there is some special need that music, by its equivalents for beauty in form and colour, should offer some compensating fields of delight, of refinement, and of imagination. On that conviction again this College has acted. Music holds in its curriculum a place of unusual prominence and importance, simply as a means of education. What in that light it can be made we have ourselves heard to-day.

But it is more than this. It is made, in a twofold development, a chief means of self-support and independence in the future. It is taken up in its higher artistic theory and practice as a profession—studied not by ear, not mechanically, but in true scientific method—so that in the musical profession as teachers, as performers, as composers, those who have been trained here may hold a not ignoble place. It is taken up as a skilled handicraft in the work of piano-tuning, for which the students are

here trained by perfect knowledge and power of construction of the piano, and on which they bring to bear a singular delicacy of ear and an even greater delicacy of touch. That work is, I believe, peculiar to the College: in it we have testimony upon testimony to declare that already its pupils are taking very high places, supporting themselves without difficulty, and commanding no small measure of support and confidence.

Surely in both directions the teaching in this College has done wisely and well. Whether in liberal or in technical education, whether in art or in handicraft, it has done rightly in laying firm hold of the power of music, and by it leading on through the ear, those whom it may not guide and lead by the eye.

III. What does it still need? For what does it venture to appeal as on this day?

It needs, first—what almost all institutions of higher education do need—the start of first establishment. So it was with the Colleges reared centuries ago in our Universities by the munificence of pious founders. So it is with the younger Colleges and Schools, which have sprung up so marvellously in the course of this century. When they are started, they may often be self-supporting. Seldom or never can they wholly dispense with initial aid. In education, as in all other spiritual processes, the commercial law of demand and supply cannot strictly hold, simply because they who most need it are often, perhaps are invariably, most unconscious of their need. Such aid this College has already received from open-handed liberality. But its establishment is not yet completed, and it is not yet, so far as it has gone, unencumbered. For such completion, that it may start free, well organised, sufficient for its purpose, it has still to plead.

Then when it is started, it needs (again in this respect not unlike other such institutions) the help of Scholarships or Exhibitions—to be given partly by competition, partly after qualifying examination to the claims of poverty—by which the poorer blind, who are capable of higher education, may enjoy it side by side with their richer brethren. If we are to realise the hope, which has been nobly expressed, that the ladder of education shall be set up between the lowest and highest grades of society, and that no one who has once set his foot on it shall be prevented from climbing as high as he has strength and nerve to climb, it is just this aid which is needed, and which is being gradually supplied. For those who see it is enjoyed already: from lower to higher schools, from higher schools to colleges, they can rise by this aid. What this College asks is, that this same aid shall be given to the blind, who need it even more, and that, for want of it, the College shall not be obliged to refuse those who could come to it and profit by its teaching, but who, unaided, cannot afford to come.

These things, perhaps beyond other things, it needs. But we must add one thing more. As yet there are compara-

tively few books and music, printed in that type in which the blind can read them. Except through the voice of the reader, there are as yet but few avenues thus opened for them into the rich fields of Literature and Art. What they have they use well and thoroughly; but they could use infinitely more; and from the nature of the case, it is but rarely that by commercial agencies they can hope to obtain what they need. It would be a work of wise and thoughtful liberality, if those who can spend money on the work would do something to increase this machinery of their education. Thank God (it has been said) for every good hook! That thanksgiving will be uttered with special emphasis for every new gain by those who have as yet but little.

These things then the College needs. But it needs above all that from which these things also may follow—a thorough understanding of its position and its aims, and a recognition by high authority of its value, as a necessary part of the higher education of the country. It is with a view to the first that I have been hidden to occupy some time in these proceedings. It is for the latter that the Council humbly and sincerely thank your Royal Highnesses to-day. The token which you have been graciously pleased to give by your presence of approval and sympathy will not (they are convinced) be lost. Encouraged and animated by it, they trust that this day may mark a new point of departure in the progress of the College in prosperity and usefulness. The work is arduous and difficult. But, believing it to be a true and good work, they thank God for the past, and look on confidently to the future.

PRESENTATION OF PRIZES AND DIPLOMAS.

The Princess of Wales, who sat at a table, with her three little daughters in a front row near her, making a very pleasant centre group, delivered the prizes and diplomas, one of the recipients being her cousin, the young Prince Alexander, who won the prize for English History.

After the distribution of prizes the Archbishop of York said a few words to express the gratification with which he had witnessed the proceedings. The visitors, he said, had been astonished at the proficiency of the pupils. The blind were receiving in this College the best education possible; it was a public school, not a charity in the ordinary sense; but endowments to start it well were necessary just as they had been found necessary for the higher education which was given to the seeing at Oxford, Cambridge, and elsewhere. He felt personally that the College was performing a most useful work in affording so perfect a system of education to the blind, and thus enabling

them to rise to independent positions, and be congratulated Mr. Campbell upon the remarkable success which had attended his energetic efforts.

The Duke of Westminster said that, as President of the College, he had the great honour and pleasure of tendering the hearty thanks of the assembly to Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, who had come down with the Prince of Wales and the young Princesses on the occasion of the distribution of prizes. From what he knew of the College he felt sure it was worthy of the honour. The interest and confidence felt by Royalty in the Institution had been shown by the fact that the education of the first cousin of the Princess of Wales, the Prince Alexander of Hesse, had been confided to the College. He was sure they were all glad to see that the Prince carried off a prize that afternoon, and he was also sure that they would all thank Her Royal Highness for coming down that day, and for having so gracefully distributed the prizes.

The Prince of Wales, in replying to the compliment, said:—‘On behalf of the Princess, and in my own name, I beg to return our best thanks to the President of this College for the vote he has been kind enough to move, and to those present for the manner in which they have supported that vote of thanks, and to assure you all that it has given us the greatest pleasure to be present upon so interesting an occasion. I entirely agree with every word which has fallen from the President, the Archbishop of York, and Canon Barry, in urging that an institution of this kind is one well worthy of support by the community at large. I must compliment Mr. Campbell, who has given such care, and has been so diligent in the manner in which he has carried out the duties as Principal of this College. From the music we have heard to-day, and the remarkable manner in which some of the pupils have played upon the organ, the pianoforte, and the violin, it is clear that great care has been bestowed upon them, and that they have been well instructed in what will be to them a charming occupation, and in their future lives must be of the greatest advantage to them. There is no doubt that amongst the many misfortunes which may happen, under the will of God, to any of us, none can be greater than the loss of sight. It is sight that we cherish more than anything else. It is therefore, I think, our duty to help those who find themselves in that unfortunate predicament. Here you give them some means, by careful tuition, to enable them, in setting out in life, not to be thrown on the care of relatives and friends, but to be able to shift for themselves. I heartily congratulate Mr. Campbell on the success of this Institution.’